

## **COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

DATE: October 25, 2005

CALLED TO ORDER: 5:10 p.m.

ADJOURNED: 7:18 p.m.

### **ATTENDANCE**

#### **ATTENDING MEMBERS**

Greg Bowes, Chair  
Patrice Abduallah  
Ginny Cain  
Susie Day  
Joanne Sanders

#### **ABSENT**

Rozelle Boyd  
Scott Schneider

## **AGENDA**

PROPOSAL NO. 467, 2005- endorses the Janitors for Justice Campaign and urges use of responsible contractors  
"Postponed"

Vote: 4-0

## **Community Affairs Committee**

The Community Affairs Committee of the City-County Council met on Tuesday, October 25, 2005. Chair Greg Bowes called the meeting to order at 5:10 p.m. with the following members present: Patrice Abdullallah, Ginny Cain, Susie Day and Joanne Sanders. Absent were Rozelle Boyd and Scott Schneider.

**PROPOSAL NO. 467, 2005-** endorses the Janitors for Justice Campaign and urges use of responsible contractors

Councillor Sanders explained the amendment to Proposal No. 467, 2005, which is illustrated as Exhibit A. She went on to explain that the title is changed from "Justice for Janitors" to "Janitors for Justice". In addition to the amendment, the wording needs to say Council Resolution instead of Special Resolution.

Councillor Sanders moved, seconded by Councillor Abdullallah, to "Amend" Proposal No. 467, 2005, as per exhibit A. The motion carried by a 5-0 vote.

Councillor Sanders went on to say that this resolution brings to light the awareness of the impact that minimum wage jobs have on large sectors of the community. She added that if Indianapolis is going to be a world class city, all citizens that reside here should be able to fully participate in their community at every level. Councillor Sanders also stated that the Council should be supportive of economic development in all aspects.

Councillor Cain asked if this committee is an appropriate forum for this discussion. Councillor Sanders stated that being a community affairs committee, the role of this committee has always been to interface with issues that affect sectors of the community. She said that this committee is the one who hears issues that affect child abuse and neglect and not everything that is heard is necessarily legislated, nor is it to make a determination about the outcome of some issues, but it certainly does give a quorum to people from within the community at these meetings.

Rebecca Maran, Lead Organizer, Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 3, thanked the committee for holding this hearing. She stated that she would like to provide some background information on Janitors for Justice. Janitors for Justice is a part of the SEIU, and the organization consists of 1.7 million men and women in the United States, Canada, and Puerto Rico. The organization is currently working with 25 cities across the country to raise standards for janitors. She also stated that there are some significant problems within the janitorial industry from being paid very little over the minimum wage to not having any benefits and healthcare for the workers and their families. Ms. Maran stated that some of the workers are employed by a company called Group Service France (GSF), which is one of the largest companies here in Indianapolis that has over 30% of the janitorial work in commercial office buildings. She stated that the workers have been organizing over the past year to form a Union and address the issues they face. She added that the workers have been on strike for over four months to protest unfair labor practices of GSF and were locked out of their jobs.

Councillor Abdullah asked if the workers that are on strike have replacements filling in for them and also asked what means of support there is for them. Ms. Maran answered in the affirmative, stating that there is help coming from other members of Local 3 and other cities have helped with the strike fund.

Leticia Corona, citizen, stated that in working for GSF at the rate of \$5.50 per hour plus a one dollar bonus, she cannot take care of her family. She also stated that the company treats the workers unfairly, there is no respect, and they have not had a raise in five years. Ms. Corona stated that she hopes the committee will support the proposal. Chair Bowes asked Ms. Corona to explain the one dollar bonus. Ms. Corona stated that the bonus is paid if any employee is on time and does not miss any work for two weeks.

Gloria Frias, citizen, also stated that in working for GSF at the rate of \$5.50 per hour plus a one dollar bonus, she cannot take care of her family. She also helps pay for her daughter's schooling in Mexico. Ms. Frias stated that she does not have any health insurance for herself or her children, so when anyone in the family gets sick, that is another bill that she cannot afford to pay with her salary after rent, utilities and food are paid. She also stated that the company treats the workers unfairly, there is no respect, and they have not had a raise in five years. Ms. Frias stated that if a machine was to breakdown, the repair costs would come out of her check. She stated that all the workers want is better benefits, and to be treated fairly and with respect. Chair Bowes asked Ms. Frias to explain how she is required to pay for broken equipment. Ms. Frias stated that she was told by a supervisor that if the cord was to break on any machine being used, the repair costs would be deducted from her check.

Beatrice Maceda, citizen, stated that she also works for GSF at the same rate as previously reported. She stated that if a person is sick or an emergency occurs and there is a day missed, the employee will lose the dollar bonus. Ms. Maceda also stated that some of the chemicals that are being used are causing blurry eyes and some respiratory problems. Councillor Abdullah asked if Ms. Maceda could explain more about how the exposure to certain chemicals is affecting job performance and asked if the company provides any protection from the toxic fumes. Ms. Maceda stated that the only thing provided is rubber gloves. She also stated that some chemicals have acid in them and sometimes your eyes can get burned.

{Clerk's Note: Councillor Cain left at 6:00 pm}

Councillor Sanders moved, seconded by Councillor Abdullah, to postpone Proposal No. 467, 2005 until November 28, 2005. Motion carried by a 4-0 vote.

Chair Bowes called for more testimony on the proposal. Sixteen more citizens testified to the importance of supporting this proposal. They ranged from employees and independent business owners to the Marion County Treasurer, and other participants. All urged the Council and the committee to support the efforts of the janitorial workers.

(Clerk's Note: See the list of citizens attached to the minutes in the Council office.)

Mark Fisher, Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce, stated that the Chamber is in opposition of this resolution as a matter of appropriateness. He also wondered if, as Councillor Cain commented, this is a legal venue for the Council to endorse a political organization. Mr. Fisher stated that while some janitors do earn between \$5.50 and \$7.50 per hour, statistics have shown in a 2003 article by the IndyStar, which was taken off of the SEIU website, that the average janitor earns \$11.34 per hour. Mr. Fisher asked that the committee check the appropriateness of such an endorsement. Councillor Sanders asked if the article in the Star gives those figures and she also asked where the figures came from. Mr. Fisher stated that the figures were from the Bureau of Labor Statistics 2003 and can be found on the SEIU website.

Councillor Sanders stated that there is much needed support for this proposal. She also stated that what happens when the value of the work goes down, not just in the janitorial industry, but within this country, the individual engaged in work subsequently moves their values to those who treat them as if they are invisible. She also stated that her concern is that those individuals are being treated as if they don't exist.

With no further business pending, and upon motion duly made, the Community Affairs Committee of the City County Council was adjourned at 7:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Greg Bowes, Chair  
Community Affairs Committee

GB/law.

